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By EE NAPA Date 4/18/88

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

BRENT SCOWCROFT

SUBJECT:

Secretary Kissinger's Discussion with
Ambassador Huang Chen on U.S.-PRC
Relations and the Taiwan Question

Introduction and Summary

In his conversation with Secretary Kissinger last week, PRC Ambassador Huang Chen emphasized that there has been no change in the PRC position on "liberation" of Taiwan as it has been stated to us in recent years by Chairman Mao and other leaders. Unlike the conversations with Senator Scott in Peking, he did not brandish the threat of military liberation, but he said flatly that there was no scope for any modification of the PRC's stance on Taiwan. The Ambassador's remarks revealed the extent to which the PRC has been provoked into its recent statements by what they consider to be an orchestrated U.S. attempt to stress the need for post-normalization assurances regarding Taiwan's security.

Background

As you will recall, Vice Premier Chang Chun-chiao told Senator Scott in mid-July that there was "very little possibility" the liberation of Taiwan could be achieved peacefully and he characterized the Taiwan issue as a noose around the neck of the U.S. which, if necessary, the People's Liberation Army would cut off. Although some of the Vice Premier's sharpest remarks to Scott appeared to be a reaction to the Senator's aggressive defense of American interests on Taiwan's security, the Vice Premier's hard line was strikingly tough. He virtually abandoned the element of ambiguity which the Chinese have maintained in recent years on the question of whether Taiwan's liberation would be military or peaceful.

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Shortly after the Scott visit, a PRC liaison office official took essentially the same line in discussions with correspondents in Washington, and since then knowledge of the hard line has spread through public media. Members of a Congressional staff delegation which has just returned from China were treated to the same tough stance, which some of them are planning to highlight in reports to their committees.

In this context, and with sufficient advance notice so that he could receive necessary instructions from Peking, Secretary Kissinger asked to see Ambassador Huang on August 18.

Summary of Conversation

After referring to "many official and non-official comments" made recently in the United States about U.S.-PRC relations, Huang repeated the standard PRC litany that:

-- the United States invaded Taiwan and thus owes China a debt;

-- in order to normalize relations with the PRC, the United States must fulfill the three conditions of breaking diplomatic relations with Taiwan, withdrawing our military forces from Taiwan, and abrogating the defense treaty -- "There can be no exception about any of these conditions, and there is no room for maneuver in carrying them out";

-- the delay in normalizing relations is entirely the responsibility of the United States; and

-- as made clear even before the United States sought to reopen relations with China, the method and the time for liberating Taiwan is an internal Chinese affair "and is not discussable."

Huang then went on to deliver the thrust of his message. "Now Americans are saying that China's liberation of Taiwan will cripple the development of Sino-U.S. relations. They are saying that Sino-U.S. relations will prosper only if the Chinese side takes into account U.S. concerns. This is a premeditated pretext. It is a flagrant threat against China, and we cannot accept it." (Huang declined to identify what he meant by "threat", but presumably he had in mind recent U.S. emphasis on Taiwan's security such as Senator Scott's comment to Vice Premier Chang that "Our policy is not to interfere in your internal

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affair -- but we stand ready to back up our commitment to Taiwan. We believe it would be in default of the Shanghai Communiqué if there were a resort to arms. Any such action would arouse 215 million Americans. I would continue to urge progressing along the path of peace. While we recognize your rights, I ask you to recognize our difficulties.")

Huang reminded Secretary Kissinger of Chairman Mao's statement to the Secretary in 1973 that Taiwan must be liberated and that the Chinese do not believe this can be done peacefully. Huang noted that the Shanghai Communiqué does not specify whether the solution to the Taiwan problem would be peaceful or otherwise.

Noting that Scott's remarks seem to have provoked Chang into "firing some cannons", Secretary Kissinger acknowledged that Chang's remarks were not basically new. He assured Ambassador Huang that we did not approve of Scott's having raised the issue of Taiwan; no one below Kissinger's own level was authorized to speak for the United States on this issue. He said that we recognize there is not unlimited time and that we must move not long after our elections to work out an agreement on completing normalization on the basis of the Shanghai Communiqué. In an effort to bring a halt to the continuing echoing of Chang's hard line on Taiwan before various American audiences, the Secretary also noted that we thought private discussion of such issues is better than public discussion.

Conclusion

Huang, who was obviously speaking with careful instructions from his government, went out of his way to emphasize that the position on Taiwan taken by Vice Premier Chang with Senator Scott was not new and was in fact consistent with comments the Chinese had made to us since the Shanghai Communiqué and even before. While indicating no greater flexibility than Vice Premier Chang, Huang seemed to be softening the Vice Premier's bluntness, reverting to the more familiar formulation that the method of Taiwan's liberation was strictly an internal Chinese matter which probably could not be achieved by peaceful means. Moreover, the Ambassador's comments indicated clearly that the PRC's recent tough line on Taiwan reflects Chinese concern about slippage in the U.S. position on Taiwan, even to the point of believing there is a concerted -- and probably U.S. Government-inspired -- attempt to stress the need for assurances about the security of Taiwan after full

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normalization of relations. While it is clear the Chinese have been using shock treatment to counteract what they consider an unhelpful trend in U.S. opinion, it is still not clear whether they fully calculated in advance the risk that such tactics might intensify anxieties in the U.S. and strengthen the very trends which they object to.

The Ambassador's remarks threw no light on the extent to which current Chinese domestic events are affecting Chinese policy toward the United States. On balance, however, they reinforce our impression that recent events in China have not altered the PRC's appraisal of the strategic advantage of its U.S. connection or led to any significant stepping up in its timetable for resolving the Taiwan problem. But at the same time the whole affair reflects a new power structure in Peking and new personalities resulting in considerably less subtlety and sophistication than associated with former Premier Chou En-lai. Moreover, whether Peking is conveying either the blunt line of Vice Premier Chang or emphasizing the continuity of its position along the lines of Ambassador Huang, the message in both cases underscores Peking's determination to leave us minimal scope to deal with our concern about the security of Taiwan and the problem of peaceful settlement.

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